

FRIENDSHIP *MATTERS*



Ending Elder Isolation, Creating Connection



How FriendshipWorks Programs Continue to Impact Social Health

By Kasley Killam, MPH

When the country declared COVID-19 a national emergency, I was reading the news and scrolling through social media in shock. At that time, I was a few months away from wrapping up my masters at Harvard's T. H. Chan School of Public Health. I could hardly believe that my degree would end in a global public health crisis.

Ironically, I had gone to grad school to specialize in isolation and loneliness—and we were about to enter months of separation and social distancing. Being familiar with the huge body of research that links social isolation to everything from common colds and cognitive decline to heart disease and mortality, I was deeply concerned.

I have long thought of connection as a healthy habit, just like nutrition, exercise, and sleep, and that we should view health as not only physical or mental but also social. During the pandemic, everyone's social health has suffered. We've all had to exercise our connection muscles in new ways—over technology or from a safe distance.

But the public often doesn't realize that isolation has been a way of life for many older adults since long before COVID-19 struck. In addition to the significant emotional cost, this takes a toll on the healthcare system and economy.

That's why FriendshipWorks plays such an important role. From a public health perspective, I believe that programs like Friendly Visiting are essential community resources. I also know that the benefits are bidirectional; if you are an elder friend, you enjoy companionship and support, and if you are a younger volunteer, you enjoy the friendship and gain a sense of meaning and purpose.

Shortly after the lockdown began, I connected with the FriendshipWorks team through our participation on the Massachusetts Task Force to

End Loneliness & Build Community—a statewide coalition that formed before the pandemic. In partnership with over 20 organizations, we launched the #ReachOutMA campaign to inspire people to connect in pandemic-safe ways.

This campaign is based on the belief that small gestures can make a big difference and brighten someone's day: giving a friend a genuine compliment, making a surprise phone call to a family member, helping an isolated neighbor with groceries. Whether you are giving or receiving these gestures, it is the connection that matters.

I learned about the importance of upstream interventions that create the conditions for health and prevent illness in the first place. There are many steps our society needs to take to create better conditions for social health and prevent isolation and loneliness.

But through my collaboration on the Task Force, I saw how each of us can meaningfully influence our communities through programs like Friendly Visiting and campaigns like #ReachOutMA. My hope is that, as the pandemic wanes and thereafter, people of all ages have learned new ways to feel connected and supported.

Together, we can change the statistics on isolation and loneliness—and in many ways; the pandemic may help us do just that, by amplifying the work of organizations like FriendshipWorks and catalyzing a movement toward greater social health.

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From Janet Seckel-Cerrotti

Executive Director

“You have given me my life back.”

This is a quote from an older adult to his friend, a FriendshipWorks volunteer. And when I hear these words, I know that we are doing something right. I know that throughout this past year—as we had to pivot so many of our programs to keep our recipients, volunteers, and staff safe from COVID-19—our mission and vision still endure and have a great impact. It is with the strength and dedication of all of those who have supported us with their time and philanthropic giving that we have remained successful in our work. Together we are conduits for critical connections, life-affirming friendships, purpose, and joy. We are having a positive impact on thousands of lives.

During these past 12 months—our 36th year, one that isolated all of us from each other, FriendshipWorks created new ways to carry out our mission. In this special issue of FriendshipMatters which celebrates friendship, interdependence, and connection, you will read about some of our program adaptations and new initiatives. You will hear stories from volunteers and recipients about their growing friendships. They show us how their involvement with FriendshipWorks and knowing they have a friend to count on has given them a sense of belonging and improved their quality of life.

As the leader of this marvelous endeavor, this is what is of particular note for me:

- In the summer and fall, I experienced the joy of attending several of our MusicWorks concerts in courtyards of elder buildings. I listened, sang, and danced along with the residents and staff to live music—sax, flute, guitar, and vocals. We smiled through our masks and shook the maracas we brought for everyone. Many elders came outside, others participated through their windows or from their balconies. The feeling of togetherness and abandon, even for just a short while, changed the fabric of my day, as I know it did for each person present.
- A very different activity was participating in FriendshipWorks 3rd Low Vision (first on-line) Forum. I learned from speakers, the panel, and the audience about the special challenges during this pandemic of being isolated and having low or no vision. Valuable feedback provided insight and resources and tools for Forum attendees, particularly in how to help someone with low vision while remaining socially distanced.
- To date, volunteers ages 12 to 70 have made and delivered 2750 handcrafted, personalized cards. Happily, this initiative is still going strong!
- Videos of pets have been created and shared with residents of assisted living and nursing homes through our PetPals program, and gifts of 273 plush stuffed animals were purchased through two grants to provide the comfort of touch and a reminder of the unconditional love that pets bring.
- And talk about impact: our Medical Escort program has remained open, ensuring that nearly 100 older adults could get the medical attention, treatment, or medication they needed.

Thanks to the impact of your involvement and the dedication of our community to our mission, the sampling of the activities and experiences noted above took place throughout the pandemic and offer you just a glimpse into the lives we have touched. Did we stand the test? I think we did.

In friendship,

Janet

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer-Driven Means Volunteer Impact

We've heard the question asked many times: What difference can one person make?

Perhaps that is illustrated in the conversation between a mouse and a wren about the impact of a snowflake.

"How much do you think a snowflake weighs?" the mouse asked the wren.

"Obviously, it weighs nothing!" the wren replied.

"I disagree," said the mouse.

"I watched the snowfall and slowly accumulate on the bough of a pine tree. I counted the flakes as they fell. Finally, when one snowflake fell and settled on the branch, the branch fell to the ground. One snowflake does weigh something—it weighed enough to make that branch fall to the ground. One snowflake made a difference!"*

In this season of change, it is reasonable to think about the impact we each make on ending elder isolation and creating social connections, one person at a time. Because to the individual, one volunteer makes all the difference in the world. It's that phone call, letter, or online visit from a Friendly Visitor, a task or an errand by a Friendly Helper, the joy music brings during an outdoor MusicWorks concert, the smiles a pet photo or video elicits from our PetPals program or a critical doctor appointment that has been kept thanks to a Medical Escort. Together, we are changing the world one person at a time multiplied by the many individuals who make up our volunteer corps—now more than 650 people strong!

We know that community connection is critical during times of crisis. It has never been truer than during the pandemic we are currently experiencing. According to a recent study "It is only through community support that those who are clinically vulnerable and who are required to 'shield' by staying at home for a protracted length of time can successfully self-isolate and maintain social distancing."**

At the beginning of the pandemic, our Friendly Visiting volunteers quickly switched from visiting in person to calling or video visiting, ensuring continuity of connection. Many new volunteers stepped up to create social connections in their community during a time of increased physical distancing. A unique initiative—card-making—was launched and is still going strong a year later! Eager to create connection by closing the

physical distance gap, families, individuals, and organizations participated creating more than 2000 homemade cards that have been sent to isolated older adults.

Volunteers have delivered groceries and medications, cleaned up yards, and cleared walkways. In fact, without the support of our volunteers, older adults might have gone without consistent connection or missed a medical appointment or medication. They created a different kind of community—for both the volunteer and the recipient.

We will never know exactly how many lives we contributed to—but we do know that the volunteers of FriendshipWorks are making the entire Greater Boston community safer, healthier, connected, and more resilient. In a volunteer survey done in 2020, FriendshipWorks volunteers told us that they gained a purpose, hope, and learned resiliency by connecting with their matches regularly. In Volunteer Listening sessions, we heard how they wanted to have more resources to help their matches and communities.

In a volunteer-driven organization, recognizing and caring for its volunteers as well as its community has become even more essential as we move forward. So, with all the excellent input we received, moving forward, FriendshipWorks will be offering regular Volunteer Engagement events that foster community, connection, and creativity.

After all, many snowflakes build a thing of beauty that can cover a community.

**Full story can be found at One Hundred Wisdom Stories from Around the World, Margaret Silf, p.29. "How Much Does a Snowflake Weigh?" Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press. Copyright (C) 2003.*

***Full article can be found at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1757913920949582>*



VOLUNTEERS



Meet Cathy Fabrizi

Healthcare Worker and FriendshipWorks Supporter

It's hard to believe that the vibrant woman projecting good energy across a Zoom meeting accomplishes all that she does and still takes time to champion a cause she not only believes and invests in but also makes part of her professional life.

On a late afternoon between shifts at Boston Medical Center, Cathy Fabrizi is relaxed and engaging, even as she shares a deep concern for the nurses she manages and the patients they serve.

"At the start of the pandemic, there was just so much going on. The hospital had to rearrange beds to make more room, just so many things happening. But I wasn't serving in the capacity of a hands-on nurse. I wrestled with the feeling that I was not doing enough," she says, growing thoughtful.

Given that Cathy is a Nurse Manager for Geriatrics Offsite Programs at Boston Medical Center, and that the effect on the elderly and most vulnerable was at the center of the COVID crisis, in reality, she had more than enough to do.

"I was doing more listening to my colleagues and supporting them to do their jobs. I found that was the best thing I could do — keep supporting them so they could be safe and provide the care needed."

That skill of listening is a key to any healthy relationship and has been paramount during this pandemic, where 'hybrid' care — a mix of telemedicine appointments online and by telephone — has been practiced to keep everyone connected to healthcare while ensuring safety.

"We have to help patients find balance. How do we take care of them? Do they need to come to the hospital, or can they be best served at home? We were working with limited resources, and we worried about their needs being met. People called us, and we tried to call them back and check on them. Our goal is care, and providing that level of care was difficult," she admits.

Cathy was well aware of the challenges that come with caring for older adults; she worked for years in New York as a nurse and experienced the issues of repeat visitors to the hospital. "We would discharge patients out to the community. And they

would come back. We couldn't understand why. We revisited that because we thought we had a good plan set up for the patient."

When she moved to Boston in 1983, it was another medical professional, a doctor, who introduced her to FriendshipWorks, and she was impressed with the model of providing connection. She started referring her patients for services, and the relationship deepened over the years.

"When you work in a hospital, you see what's happening inside, not necessarily outside." That's where FriendshipWorks has been a key support for medical personnel, according to Cathy.

"I want people to know that FriendshipWorks has many different programs—in addition to Medical Escorts—that can help isolated elders to improve their health and well-being. Addressing isolation impacts the mental health of those you serve, which is just as important as addressing physical health."

Cathy believes that being a geriatric nurse provides her with a holistic approach to care by seeing the bigger picture beyond the care that a hospital provides. She points out that family members who may be caregivers need and get a break by having a FriendshipWorks Friendly Visitor for an hour so that medication can be picked up. Or, having an invaluable Friendly Helper sort paperwork to pay bills, check the mail, or even clear a path to the mailbox helps so much.

Cathy loves to share how FriendshipWorks has made a difference to patients and colleagues with



whom she has worked.

“FriendshipWorks is a trusted friend, and colleagues know that FriendshipWorks is here to support many of our isolated elders in so many ways,” she explains, adding: “Specifically, for healthcare by getting elders to appointments when there is no other way to get there and supporting them through the appointment; helping elders understand what the provider is talking about; reinforcing the providers’ health instructions and assisting in obtaining medications or supplies from the pharmacy.”

The irony of the headlines in the last year is not lost to those working and supporting the field of social isolation and well-being. For 36 years, FriendshipWorks has made reducing elder isolation the heart of its mission. Now, during the pandemic, more research and studies have shown a clear path between social isolation and the well-being of older adults as a social determinant of health. Cathy feels this is a small victory for what she has seen and experienced throughout her career.

“Care of older adults is not top of mind. Geriatrics is last on the list. Social isolation is so obvious but people don’t think about it as a mental health issue. The tasks get done but they have to think about the bigger picture. In geriatrics, you have a more holistic approach so we can recognize when social isolation and loneliness affect older adults, what supports they need to have, or what barriers exist.”

While physical distancing continues as vaccinations roll out, Cathy believes FriendshipWorks will continue to be an important part of assisting older adults in the future to access their health care and overall well-being. “FriendshipWorks was here helping elders before the pandemic and will be needed well after the pandemic resolves—maybe more so.”

Cathy’s message to our readers: “Don’t forget about our elders. They have a lot to offer us that we can learn from. They have given a lot to our city and our country. Elders deserve attention and love back. The people we serve at Boston Medical Center need the support of other people. People can make a difference by supporting FriendshipWorks!”

The Impact of Volunteers, Interns and Fellows

FriendshipWorks benefits from the energy and talents of office volunteers and interns, and collaborations with other volunteer organizations. In addition to over 650 direct-service volunteers, FriendshipWorks office volunteers share their skills to move our work forward. Long-term volunteer Zippy Ostroff has dedicated countless hours as our bookkeeper. She is a key member of the FriendshipWorks team; things just run better when Zippy is around. This last year, Priscilla Ballou and Bruce Cohen worked in the office, providing tech help, grant writing, and event support. Development volunteer Alice Zaff shared her years of experience in donor engagement, helping us improve our individual giving.

programs over the course of the next year.

We are also hosting two Ignatian Volunteer Corp volunteers, Joanne Meehan and Joan Byrne. Joanne is helping with office administrative activities, and Joan is supporting our outreach efforts. They both have previous experience in the health care sector, and Joan is a long-time Medical Escort for FriendshipWorks. They each give two days a week of dedicated service to improve our work.

We are grateful for the intelligence and creativity that interns bring to our programs. Last summer, we hosted Harvard Divinity School intern Nick Scrimenti, who facilitated a series of Volunteer Listening Sessions

“In addition to over 650 direct-service volunteers, FriendshipWorks office volunteers share their skills to move our work forward.”

Organizations like Quaker Voluntary Service (QVS) and Ignatian Volunteer Corp (IVC) connect us with a pool of talented and invested volunteers who strengthen our work. QVS places recent college graduates from around the country with social services organizations committed to making the world a better place. Last year, we hosted our first QVS fellow, Grace Beavin who conducted community outreach and engaged in over 20 Medical Escorts. In September, our second fellow, Olivia Tennyson, began working with us overseeing our LGBT Elder Initiative and will support our many planned educational

and offered recommendations for deepening the engagement of volunteers. Tufts Master of Public Health student Julia Pearl-Schwartz joined us last summer and engaged in research for expanding our programs for Latinx elders. Graphic design interns have helped us create dynamic and relevant marketing materials.

Office volunteers, interns, and partnership agencies provide dedicated talent that enriches our programs and becomes part of the FriendshipWorks family.

VOLUNTEERS

Telefriends Celebrates One Year with FriendshipWorks during the Pandemic



Like so many things and people that connect the Irish of Boston to their roots in Ireland, FriendshipWorks' Telefriends program had its beginnings on the Emerald Isle. In 1988, Mary Nalley, a long-term care nurse, invited her mother to come to live with her. Recognizing the isolation her mother—and many other older adults in rural areas were experiencing—she set up Bingo at her home. When 40 people attended from rural areas, Mary knew she was on to something. When she asked what these older adults wanted and needed, their resounding answer was connection. Thus Telefriends was born.

Mary recognized what FriendshipWorks did in 1984, that social isolation is prevalent in older adults and has dire effects on their health and well-being. Eventually, the program grew to encompass dozens of counties all over Ireland and transferred across the Atlantic, landing in Boston at the Irish Pastoral Centre.

Susan Doody began working with the Telefriends Program in 2012, implementing the Irish model as a call-out line to connect with elders in the community. In December 2016, Susan connected with FriendshipWorks at a networking meeting of senior service agencies. Executive Director Janet Seckel-Cerrotti was invited to attend the next meeting, where she learned more about Telefriends and began talking about program similarities.

“Our goal was to build partnerships and bring referrals, secure funding, share resources, and expand service areas,” Susan explains. In 2017, we began a three-year pilot project to work with FriendshipWorks and reached 60 seniors as a milestone,” she adds.

In 2020, many things changed significantly, but for FriendshipWorks, it was for the better! After the Irish Pastoral Centre was restructured, Susan was hired as the new FriendshipWorks Telefriends Coordinator, and now, we celebrate a year of partnership and friendship.

“Telefriends is an important addition to the many services that FriendshipWorks provides. It especially helps to make the social connection and provide extra support to those finding themselves in need of a friend.”

Susan notes that some people have been Telefriends for eight years, and during that time, some recipients have had circumstances change due to moves, illnesses, loss of a spouse, or other situations. “And yet, Telefriends can talk with people going through transitions,” Doody notes.

Echoing a FriendshipWorks' Volunteer survey done last summer, Doody says that volunteers in the Telefriends program are also experiencing benefits to connecting during the pandemic.

“Volunteers talked about resilience and how the people they talked to cope with challenges. It put their lives into perspective,” she said, noting that sharing these things deepens their compassion. “A physical situation can make them feel down. You just have to walk alongside them and make sure it is not cutting them off,” she offers.

For older adults who share their experiences, it provides them with a sense of dignity and purpose—tenets of FriendshipWorks' mission. “Older adults feel they are being productive and helping, and that makes them feel worthwhile,” Doody added.

As the Irish say: *Slainte! Health!*

“Telefriends is an important addition to the many services that FriendshipWorks provides.”

Supporter & Telefriends Match: Rev. David Shepherd King

Reverend David Shepherd King is still a busy individual. After 65 years as an ordained minister, a life of service devoted to caring for others and in particular, serving older adults, he continues to be a resource for people and engage with others. At 93, he says he comes by his longevity honestly, which gives him a unique perspective into what older adults need and may be experiencing as they age.

“I had two grandmothers who lived into their 100th year and a sister who lived into her 90s,” he says by phone.

Serving as a minister in Amherst and Connecticut, Rev. King worked primarily with aging adults. It was in Connecticut while working at the Center City Church with the Aging, that their name caught his attention. “It said WITH the Aging NOT for,” he emphasizes, adding, “The church was encouraging people to do things (as able) for themselves instead of having things done for them.”

So that philosophy felt like a natural segue when he moved back to Boston and met FriendshipWorks’ Executive Director Janet Seckel-Cerrotti through what was then Match-Up Interfaith Volunteers (which became FriendshipWorks). And thus began his journey with FriendshipWorks more than 36 years ago.

“Janet and I were part of a small group talking about housing, health, transportation, etc., but we

did not discuss the life of the spirit. So, we began running seminars for people working in the field of aging to talk about spiritual life,” he said.

He watched his own family’s experience with health challenges that decreased their social circles until eventually, they lost contact with friends, creating a terrible sense of isolation. Rev. King did all he could to assist them, so when FriendshipWorks came into being, he was one of its original supporters.

“Now, I am a recipient of their services,” he candidly offers.

Rev. King participates in the Telefriends (see adjoining article) initiative administered through the Friendly Visiting program, in which volunteers call people every week to check-in and connect.

“Susan Doody calls me, and we talk. I have people that call me every day and every week.”

He notes that in his three decades with FriendshipWorks, it has always impressed him that FriendshipWorks demonstrates a desire to keep people in contact and in touch.

Rev. King feels his life experience and work have come full circle.

“I’m 93 years old, so I found out just how important friendships are.”

Card-Making Pop-up Initiative Delivers Connection and Smiles

Good old-fashioned cards and letters to elders have made a most-welcome reappearance during the pandemic, keeping the post office busy and senders and recipients connected. Homemade cards have created smiles, memories, moments, and connections for individuals with no access to technology. The telephone and mailbox have become lifelines.



Thanks to FriendshipWorks’ Card-Making Initiative, older adults in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and senior residences have received 1800 cards and letters regularly as snail mail has come back into favor.

What started as a pop-up initiative for a few people wanting to make a difference for the most socially isolated elders quickly gained traction among all ages, civic groups, families, and individuals. The annual Gay For Good Valentine’s Day card-making event added 950 cards! As of this printing, more than 2750 total cards have been sent to older adults in need of connection, and the initiative is still going strong, with monthly themes and family and groups proudly sharing their creativity on social media.



VOLUNTEERS

PetPals Delivered Comfort in Pawsitively Delightful Ways

FriendshipWorks volunteers are providing friendship and support with phone calls, accompaniment to medical appointments, personalized cards, online visits, errands, and during the fall, outdoor music concerts. But noticeably absent from that mix were the PetPals teams.

“Since the start of the pandemic, our PetPals teams have been unable to visit their friends in nursing homes, assisted living, and residences due to safety measures. So the PetPals teams put together a Pawsitive Pets video with their dogs to provide greetings, updates, and demonstrate some new skills,” said Janet Hirsch, FriendshipWorks PetPals Program Coordinator. “But staff and volunteers still wanted to find a tangible way to truly connect.”

Hirsch recounts that surveys were sent to facilities and residences that FriendshipWorks serves. The responses were overwhelming among the choices presented—stuffed animals would be loved. So FriendshipWorks received a grant for PetPals to purchase unique stuffed animals from Memorable Pets. Now, FriendshipWorks’ PetPals program can provide the next best thing to an in-person PetPals visit!

“These specially designed plush animals can uniquely bring the unconditional love and comfort of a pet to people,” added Hirsch.

This pop-up initiative was pawsitively wonderful! Our PetPals program brought some elders an experience as close as possible to the comfort and touch of a pet, thanks to quality, soft-stuffed animals. Hirsch and her husband David Helm delivered more than 167 pets along with homemade cards to six buildings in Greater Boston.

“Staff from buildings like Sherrill House, Landmark at Longwood, and Mount Pleasant have been thrilled with the animals,” Hirsch noted. “They have reiterated how much these pets will make a difference to the individuals for whom they are intended. The smiles on their faces have made it all worthwhile.”

New research indicates that animals have emerged as one of the important factors filling the loss of human contact and touch due to prolonged social isolation. Those losses have been particularly difficult for vulnerable individuals for whom pets provide comfort and family connection.

“It has also been trying for the teams and pets that miss visiting their friends, so Memorable Pets feel like a good interim solution,” noted Hirsch.

When asked about her new “friend,” one recipient summed it up, “He’s mine and I love him.” The initiative has been so well received that the second round of 106 stuffed animals was recently delivered!

Moving forward in 2021, PetPals will continue to evaluate when it is safe to begin visiting nursing homes and assisted living facilities again. Much will depend on the state of the pandemic, COVID-19 and vaccination levels, facilities establishing when they can allow visitors, and when our volunteers are vaccinated. But we hope to at least be able to visit with residents outside in the not-too-distant future!



Davida and Divya – A Friendly Visiting Match That Made the News!



Last May, all of Boston was introduced to the beautiful friendship of Davida Pekarsky and her match, Divya Pawar, thanks to a feature story written and broadcast by WGBH. At the time, the state was in lockdown, and people, schools, and businesses were trying to sort out how best to keep moving forward.

Of particular concern were seniors and those with chronic health conditions who had been disproportionately affected by the COVID virus through social distancing policies and stay-at-home orders. As a result, for FriendshipWorks, whose mission is to reduce elder isolation, 2020 was the busiest year in its 36-year history.

Davida and Divya are part of the Friendly Visitor program and for Davida, the program was a lifeline. Unable to leave her residence or fully interact with others due to safety concerns, her weekly phone and Zoom calls with Divya were not only reassuring, but essential.

“Being able to see a person as well as talk with them, even if it is through technology, was comforting,” she explains. “You can see facial characteristics, expressions, and gestures.”

That is how their relationship progressed until the warmer weather allowed for in-person outdoor visits that were six-feet apart. For Davida, it was a turn in the road for the better. “We were

able to safely interact, see other people in our building, and look forward to things.”

Being able to expand their Zoom connection to outdoor visits was something that was poignant for both women. “Divya came quite regularly,” Davida says.

Divya notes, “Until it got cold, we could see each other in-person outside and hang out and be in each other’s presence. We could chat about our week.”

Both ladies agree that having a routine during the pandemic to break up the days and weeks proved to be essential as days blended into weeks and weeks became months.

“It gave some momentum to the week if I knew that people were coming,” she added. That was something, Davida emphasizes, that connected to her overall well-being.

Divya concurs. “The regular interaction provided some structure for me; I was interacting with a friend, and I’ve been grateful for that.”

“It helps to have a companion like that. It fulfills a lot of functions; in communications and organizing my thoughts about certain things, having someone to talk to about things, and visits – in-person or online – gives direction to my days,” said Davida.

Despite the four-and-a-half decades that separate them, their friendship remains timeless. “Our relationship has evolved – we’ve become quite good friends,” Davida relates.

She relates that Divya has been caring for a very sick pet, so it’s been a difficult time for her. “I’ve been trying to comfort her [Divya] about that. I think it’s helped her. And in turn,” she adds thoughtfully, “it has helped me. We’ve become reciprocal friends, which is really nice.”

Davida says that their friendship has become both comforting and nourishing.

Divya echoes the sentiments of her friend. “Davida is a friend; a good friend. We know each other’s personal experiences. She is like a guide for me.”

Now that a year has passed, and there have been steps toward new normalcy, Davida is ready to get going.

“I’m looking for ways to try new things, like going to Walgreens!”

Her friendship with Divya was the one constant in a year that was continually changing.

“It is a wonderful opportunity to have the friendship of somebody,” Davida says of FriendshipWorks.

“It is a
wonderful
opportunity
to have the
friendship of
somebody.”

~ Davida Pekarsky, FriendshipWorks recipient

VOLUNTEERS

Still Sharing and Making Beautiful Music Together

Just as the notes on a sheet of music culminate in a work of art, the creative efforts of our MusicWorks program ensured that a synchronous blend of outdoor concerts and specially recorded CDs brought the joy of music to dozens of older adults, caregivers, and building staff all year.

From the outset of the pandemic, MusicWorks musicians, staff, and volunteers were eager to provide a musical link for isolated older adults with whom we knew music not only resonated but also offered a connection to their culture, memories, and each other. Thanks to the collaboration and support of Goddard House Community Initiatives, MusicWorks continues to bring music to older adults in creative but safe ways.

By partnering with the various buildings where MusicWorks programs are delivered, we were able to establish ways to perform concerts that could be safely attended from courtyards, balconies, windows, or walkways.

Throughout the summer and into the Fall, MusicWorks held outdoor concerts at elder buildings in Jamaica Plain and the South End, with two additional concerts in Jamaica Plain and Roxbury in October.

With each performance—and continuing good weather—the popularity of the concerts grew. So did the overall participation! Residents (and staff) were dancing, singing along, swaying, or shaking maracas. Some residents even performed with the musicians at a safe distance.



The positive feedback from the Resident Service Coordinators was overwhelming. Coordinators told FriendshipWorks that residents really enjoyed the music, participating, and connecting.

“Music is powerful. As people listen to it, they can be affected.”
-Ray Charles

As 2020 slowly wound to a close, just prior to the holidays, MusicWorks created and distributed over 850 CDs. Four musicians recorded exclusively for the CD, which included an introduction from FriendshipWorks and music in both Spanish and English. The MusicWorks

program also distributed information about all FriendshipWorks programs, along with our special interfaith newsletter, *The Companion*, and postcards for contact information.

As we look into 2021, MusicWorks musicians have produced another 850 CDs, are already planning outdoor spring and summer concerts, and the first new MusicWorks concert to be aired on public access TV in Boston and Brookline! The show will feature two of our MusicWorks artists in a 4-part series airing this year.

They say that music never truly stops—like the song that gets stuck in your head. In 2020 and beyond, we are pleased to say that was definitely the case at FriendshipWorks!

Providing Meaningful Engagement During the Pandemic

Every volunteer match moves FriendshipWorks closer to meeting our mission to reduce social isolation, maintain dignity, and enhance the quality of life of seniors in the Boston area. In addition to our direct service, yearly community building and educational initiatives allow us to reach out to the communities we serve while offering opportunities for engagement and learning.

During this time of social distancing, FriendshipWorks has provided meaningful opportunities online to over 200 participants. Here are some highlights from our events:

We offered our third low vision forum, *Opening Doors For Seniors with Vision Loss: A Discussion of Safety and Accessibility*. The forum added best practices to serve elders with low vision or no vision during times of physical distancing and raised awareness about the need for safe and inclusive services.

One participant shared, “I am new to my job and vision loss issues, so it was just great to get so much information about the challenges. It made me aware of resources that are available.” Others highlighted how important it was to have adults with vision loss as speakers and panelists.

- We held a *Service of Remembrance* as an opportunity for volunteers and community partners to gather, grieve the many losses we have experienced during the year, and uphold the lives of those we loved. Musician Ana Hernandez led us in uplifting chants, and our partners at Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly and Sherrill House offered poetry readings and a recitation of names. The Service was picked up by WBUR, who offered another avenue to honor our elders who passed away this year.
- We held three *LGBT StoryShare* events as virtual community-building activities. Through storytelling, we inspired the community, commemorated the past, and celebrated our shared humanity. Participants shared how meaningful it was to listen to and share stories; one participant shared, “This event was amazing to hear people of different ages tell their stories.”
- FriendshipWorks held our first of two Lunch & Learn opportunities, *Blue Skies Ahead: Emotional Well-being During the Winter Season*. This virtual workshop highlighted practices to address emotional needs, with special attention to the impacts of social isolation posed by COVID-19. Participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to build community and gain support during this time.

In addition to these events, FriendshipWorks created The Companion, an interfaith newsletter with contributions from faith traditions and spiritual leaders, which we distributed to 1500 elders. This newsletter included reflections, photographs, an adult coloring page, and a word search. Our intention was to bring a little light into the lives of elders who had little to look forward to during COVID-19. One elder shared a single-word sentiment, “Beautiful.”



A LOOK BACK

Walk to End Elder Isolation, May 17, 2020

Hundreds of supporters joined together with our staff and Board for our first-ever **Walk to End Elder Isolation: A Virtual Gathering** during a live and very meaningful program—despite a world-wide Zoom crash! There was shared music, the presentation of two David Libby Awards to outstanding volunteers, cartoons to bring a bit of humor to our quarantine, heartfelt stories from elders, raffles, and pictures from people’s walks! All around, it was a success, and we are humbled and grateful.

The Walk garnered over \$78,200 from over 690 individual donations, 38 teams, 17 corporate, and 8 individual sponsors! THANK YOU!



Kyle Robidoux and his wife & daughter made the walk a family affair.



Grace Beavin and her friends posted their walk.



FriendshipWorks board member Dean Denniston Jr. and Gus, his companion, walk the block.



Sisters Cathy Fabrizi and Patricia Donlan cheer during their walk.



Musician Lauren Pratt performed.



Dogs lead their 2 legged friends on walks, too!



The David Libby Award-winning volunteers: Russ Colton (bottom) and Annette Rubin (top).



Walk participants joined by Zoom for a special presentation before heading out on their walks.



The Waybright family (mom & sisters Christy & Anjuli) shared their Walk photos.

IN PHOTOS

A Look back at our 35th Anniversary Celebration

In November 2019, our *My Friend, My World Gala* convened 300 friends to celebrate our 35th anniversary. The inspiring evening started with a cocktail hour featuring our MusicWorks musicians playing and PetPals teams greeting attendees! Guests could also have their pictures taken at the interactive FriendshipWorks photo booth.

This was followed by a delicious dinner and an awards ceremony that honored **Sandra Albright** with the **Friendship Award** for her dedicated career supporting older adults in Massachusetts and the **Boston Medical Center** with the **Catalyst Award** recognizing their outstanding care and support of older adults.



Commissioner Emily Shea, Friendship Award winner Sandy Albright, and Janet Seckel-Cerrotti.



Kate Walsh, Boston Medical Center, accepts the Catalyst Award from Janet Seckel-Cerrotti.

Guests were treated to our new video, *Creating Connections Through Friendships*, and a fun Live Auction that kept the evening buzzing. Capping the evening with the familiar tunes of yesteryear was Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee Darlene Love!

This event raised \$375,000 thanks to the generosity of so many! We're grateful we could be together and raise funds ahead of a time when our services would be more essential than ever.



The FriendshipWorks PetPals teams proudly welcomed guests at the Gala PetPals Park.



MusicWorks: Goddard House CEO and MusicWorks partner Candace Cramer with MusicWorks musicians Cornell W. Coley and Devin Ferreira.



Andrea Cohen, Co-founder & CEO of HouseWorks and Denise McQuade, President & COO of Benchmark Wellness Management.



Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Inductee, Darlene Love performs with her band.



Live Auctioneer David Brown and FriendshipWorks Board Chairperson Connie Packard sharing a moment.



Fund-A-Mission drew great engagement from the Gala guests.



Executive Director Janet Seckel-Cerrotti speaks before the Gala attendees.



Gala crowd overview photo.

IN HONOR OF ...

<i>From</i>	<i>Gifts in Honor Of</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Gifts in Honor Of</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Gifts in Honor Of</i>
Mary Gunn	Sandra Albright	Robert Gray	Emma Gray	Jamie Levy	Connie Packard
Michael Festa	Sandra Albright	Susan Sidel	Barbara Griffiths	Joseph Khirallah	Connie Packard
Wendy Weiss	Sandra Albright	Rev. Joy and Robert Fallon	Gus and Dean Denniston	Thomas Greenwood	Connie Packard
Jeremy Alliger	Janet Alliger	Mike Williams	Gus Busters	Ann Jackman	Connie Packard
Anonymous	Alithia	Robert Jordan	Gus Busters	John Sequeira	Connie Packard
Anonymous	All of Connie's good work	Shelley Barron	Gus Busters	Kristine Peak-Oliveira	Papa
Debra Harden	All our cherished elders	Neal Braverman	Gus Busters & of course Dear Dean!	Adam, Annie, and Barry Dugan-Lewis	Pat, You Rock!
Bonni DiMatteo	All those first responders who kept vigils over the dying patients	Robert and Joy Fallon	Gus and Dean Denniston	Patrice FitzGerald	Paul Pinard
Katherine C and Brian Connelly	All of those feeling isolated these days!	Joseph Collins	Gus!	Fabiola Oliveira	Grete Oliveira Pinto
Allison and Eric Rimm	Alma and Bob's friendship	Donald Jeffery	Gus, of course!	Karen Poggi	Maureen Poggi
Alice Tobin Zaff and Alan Zaff	Alma and Bob's Friendship and Commitment to Community and Music	Michael and Carol Kort	Mallory Harrison's Birthday	Dorothy and Wesley W. Clarke	Elouise Porter
Lisa Sarno	Nancy Antin	Ms. Ellen Zellner	Serena Heartz	Darcy Hofmann	Presentation Nursing Home in Brighton
Emily Seckel	Aunt Janet and all of her hard work for a great cause	James M and Karen Helm	Janet Hirsch	Linda Berard	Ernest R.
Ross Seckel	Aunt Janet and Uncle Dennis	Marjorie Glazer	Janet Hirsch	Mark Reid, Kim, Emmy, Kelsey and the critters	Emily and Brian
Alithia Monroe	Elain Bakal	Marilyn Hollier	Bill & Edna Hollier	Leah Camhi	Logan Reid
Ms. Ellen Zellner	Mr. Craig Baker	Jeffrey Laflamme	HouseWorks	Clara Decerbo	Michelle Reinstein and Sage
Gilbert Bickel	Priscilla Ballou	Karen Hurvitz	Joyce & Arthur Hurvitz	Michael and Carol Kort	Annette Rubin's Birthday
Michelle Rediker	Remijio Bautista	Margarita Siafaca	In honor of my friends who took care of me while recovering from a broken hip	Lois Waller	Helaine A. Scarborough's Birthday
Marlenny Anziani	Alma Berson	Bernadette Macon-Bell	Mary Irvin	Ann Abrams Janet	Janet Seckel-Cerrotti
Robert Malster	Bernita	Jenny Amory	Janet	Alison Shtulsaft	Seckel-Cerrotti
Jeff Iverson	Deena & Michael Blau	Alice Tobin Zaff and Alan Zaff	Janet, Rachael, and Family	Caryl and Jeff Leavitt	Janet Seckel-Cerrotti
Roz and Wally Bernheimer	Mrs. Frances Marie Bloom	Alice Tobin Zaff and Alan Zaff	Kara Jeter	Christy Waybright	Janet Seckel-Cerrotti
Laurie Bloom	Bo and the band	Gerald Blum	Julie's Purple Creativity, Goodness and Hard Work	Laurie Ruskin	Janet Seckel-Cerrotti
Anonymous	Mary Welles Bruce	Deborah Kaufmann	Murray Frank	Mark LaFrance	Janet Seckel-Cerrotti
Viana Bruce	Marke Byrne	Hedi Jalon	Julie Kaufmann	Naomi Ribner	Janet Seckel-Cerrotti
Alexander Gray	Marke Byrne	Rae Simpson	Julie Kaufmann	Reverend Judith and Bob Krumme	Janet Seckel-Cerrotti
Bob Berardino	Marke Byrne	Katie and Jaimie King	Julie Kaufmann	Roz and Wally Bernheimer	Janet Seckel-Cerrotti
Joan DeNapoli-Byrne and Patrick Byrne	Marke Byrne	Tracy Slater	Rev. David Shepherd King	Theodore Pietras and Jane Schenkel	Janet Seckel-Cerrotti
SH Alexander	Amy Bucher	Joey and Bridget	Ellen Kirchheimer	Barbara Moss	Sylvia Selterman
Hemanth Gundavaram	Cara's Dedication and Goodness	Xurong Peng	Keith Kotfica and Family	Stephen Pelletier	Tom Simpson and Rosalind Page
Alice Tobin Zaff	Carolyn and Friendly Helpers	Ian MacDonald	Chunrong Li	Amanda Teal	Olga Smith and Emiliana Barrows Smith
Frances Young	Lance Chapman	Margaret Ishler	Pat Maguire	Jose Aquino	Carmen Soto de Pena
Virginia Mazur	Christy	Sophie Kidian	Patricia Maguire	Erin O'Donnell	Cara Stuka
Alice Tobin Zaff	Florence Chvat, my mother (96 years old)	Anonymous	Ethel Margolin	Alan Swartz	Minnie and Benjamin Swartz
Carol Kort	Andrea Cohen	Donald Ross	Elza Maria	Karen Soorian	The FW Staff, old and new
Julie Rosen and Gary Belowich	Andrea Cohen	Brita Gill-Austern	Jeannie Martin	Donald Denniston	Thor
Richard Barasch	Russ Colton	Priscilla Stone	Jeannie Martin	Linda Corinne	Those struggling with COVID 19
Maris Groger	Ree Dawson	Jessie McIntyre	Brenda Marston	Michelle Morrison	Cathy Trawick
Daniel Wells	Dean and Gus	Michael Kirkpatrick	Peter McIntyre	Stephen Walsh	Truman
Betsy Peterson	Frank (Kenny) Dearborn	Susan Wolfson	Dorothy McWhinney	William Clark	Uncle Dean and Gus
Susan Dearborn	Peg & Jack Debenham & Family	Natasha Cassamajor	My amazing friend and advocate Dean	Thomas Gallitano	Bo Winiker and Family
Jane Debenham	Dean Denniston and Gus	Chris Grande	My dad	Lisa Kantor	Annette Winiker
JB Sweeney	Dean Denniston and Gus	Chris Grande	My great clients!	Bo Winiker	Annette Winiker
Levina Wong	Dean Denniston	Laurie Green	Barbara JG Odierna	Ellen Stein	Annette Winiker
Arthur & Joan O'Neill	Nellie Diamond	Richard Odierna	Hank Odierna	Joyce Graff	Annette Winiker
Edward Kutchin	Hana Dubova	Vickie Mancini	Odierna Family	Ursula and John Connors	Annette Winiker
Marilyn Feldman	Emilia and Richard	Jennifer Mathews	Our 95-yr-old mom Evelyn Anderson	Susan Harr	Sandra Wixted
Rachael Cerrotti	Executive Director Janet Seckel-Cerrotti	Bonnie Michelman	Our friends at the Zelma Lacey House!	Mila Spitkovsky	WW2 Veterans
Richard Donahue	Family & Friends	Lawrence Elswit	Connie P.	Barbara J. Ross	Alice Tobin Zaff
Nina Israel	Blanche Field	Carol Arnold	Connie Packard	Katherine C. Tobin	Alice Tobin Zaff
Helena Finnegan	Susan Tresch Fienberg	Richard Odierna	Connie Packard	Marcia Zuckerman	Marjorie Evelyn Wohl Zuckerman
Karen and Jelle Schoen	Helena Finnegan	Vickie Mancini	Connie Packard		
Rachel Albert	Elaine Francis	Jennifer Mathews	Connie Packard		
Scott Goba	FriendshipWorks Team	Ellen Berlin	Connie Packard		
Janet Orcutt	FriendshipWorks Volunteers	Susan Foster	Connie Packard		
Sandra Harris	Susan Foster	Adam Frank	Connie Packard		
Dr. Qi Zhou	Adam Frank	Zipi Garlitz	Connie Packard		
Pamela Mann & David Barron	Garry	Ruth & Arvin Grabel	Connie Packard		
Danielle Forbes	Ruth & Arvin Grabel	Ruth Grabel's Birthday	Connie Packard		
Gerald Garlitz	Ruth Grabel's Birthday	Grandma Alice--98 yrs young and living at home	Connie Packard		
Robert Biegler	Grandma Alice--98 yrs young and living at home	Grandma Linnie	Connie Packard		
Marva Serotkin	Grandma Linnie		Connie Packard		
Terri Gould					
Laurie Fitzgerald Graham					
Justin Reeves					

Celebrating
Have Touche

IN MEMORY OF . . .

<i>From</i>	<i>Gifts in Memory Of</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Gifts in Memory Of</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Gifts in Memory Of</i>
Breauna Campbell	Abram	Harriet Seeley	Billie D	Paula Monteiro	Anna Monteiro
Vito and Cece Colombo	Veronique Alfred	Natercia Pereira	Dad & Vavo	Barbara Moss	Claire and Samuel Moskowitz
Lynda Picard	All the beautiful souls who have passed before us!	JB Sweeney	Dean Denniston's guide dogs Houston and Thor	Mark Byrne	My friends who have passed
Bonni DiMatteo	All those who lived and died alone	Donald Denniston	Mr. and Mrs. Dean K Denniston Sr.	Antonio Centeio	My Grandfathers
Fabiola Oliveira	Ancestry	Elaine DeVillier	Howard DeVillier	Karen Novakoff	Shirley Novakoff
Bernadette Macon-Bell	Estelle Anderson	Setarreh Massihzadegan	Dennis Doherty	Christopher Grande	Dave O'Connell
Joni Waybright	Grandma Jean Argenbright	Steve Dutton and Paul Dutton	Their father, John Dutton	Richard Odierna	Michael & Lucy Odierna
Cathy and Fulvio Fabrizi	Johanna Baranello	Denice ThornhillDean	Denniston Sr. & Sue Edwards	Linda Opdycke	Jason Opdycke
Eileen Falk	Johanna Baranello	Emily Greenwell	Barbara Ehman	Joseph Paciorek	Kathleen Szabo Paciorek
Betsy Keating	Johanna Baranello	Ree Dawson	Jim Elkins	Jessica Pires	Maria Pacitto (my Friendly Visiting Pal)
Francis and Clare Wohlgemuth	Johanna Baranello	Donna Clifford	Dorothy Emerson	Paul Barden	Maria Pacitto
Patricia Donlin	Johanna Baranello	Cathy and Fulvio Fabrizi	Silvana Fabrizi	Chris Grande	Papa
Frank Pedlow	Johanna Baranello	Jane Maggiong	Mary Farley	Maeve Flanagan	Papa
Hollis Day	Johanna Baranello	Mary Fingliss	Joseph Fingliss	James Paradis	Annie Paradis
Jessica Restrepo	Johanna Baranello	Lisa Fliegel	Bert Fliegel	Arthur Parmakian	Marietta Parmakian
Michele Domanick	Johanna Baranello	Susan Foster and Bruce Horwitz	Nancy Foster	Robert Del Savio	Patsy, Leo, and May
The Geriatrics Sunshine Fund and BMC Ambulatory Clinic Staff	Johanna Baranello	Rachel Goodman	My Grandmother Margaret Fried Goodman	Dawn Labrie	Augustine Pepe
Laura Kaufman	Johanna Baranello	Ms. Ellen Zellner	Peter Gossels	Lisa Merowitz	Janet Perkes (grandmother)
Regina and Angela Bayer and Family	Johanna Baranello	Anjuli Waybright	Gramma Jean	Carmen Quinonez	Felix Quinonez
Stephen Levin	Hinda (Ida) Barron	Chenkuo Yang	Grandma	Roberta Ferretti	Mr. Ramaswamy
Nabil Khan	Sardar Begum	Rebecca Gibian	Grandad, Grandma & Grandma, Pop-Pop	Myrna Hagin	Herman and Sylvia Rathburn
Alma R. Berson and Robert Malster	Celia and Robert Benney	Christopher Grande	Ralph Grande	Shivani Shah	Ree
Lawrence Bentley	Alan Bentley	Denise McQuaide	Caroline Grape	Diane Ripstein	Helene and Horace Ripstein
Dana Pabst	Ralph & Joan Bershefsky	Robert Gray	Christiana Gray	Aida Manduley	Mary Rose
Laura Hendrickson	Abram Botvinik	Rachel and Philip Sher	Their dog, Haylee	Karuna O'Donnell	Mary Rose
Heather Watkins Goodhue	Ruth Brown	Henry Asher	Edward Heartz	Karen Enegeess	Mary V. Rose
David Segan	Mary Bruce	Ms. Ellen Zellner	Ed and Irene Heartz	Diana Rubin	Jack and Edith Rubin
Douglas Bruce	Mary Bruce	Jaine Darwin	John Helm	Scott Rutledge	Paul Rutledge Sr.
Lynn Girton	Mary Bruce	David Helm	John D. Helm III	Rosalie Cryan	Ruthie
Jane Debenham	Mary Bruce & family	Cheryl Mahoney	Caroline Horne	Hank Shafran	Milton and Pauline Shafran
Viana Bruce	Mary Welles Bruce	Karen Jacobs	Ruth and Larry Jacobs	Adrian Sheldon	E. and S. Sheldon
Charles Bruce	Mary Bruce	Veronica Johnson	Mrs. Ollie Johnson	Dr. Sara Roy and Jay, Annie and Jess Schnitzer	Sean Michael Shubert
Thomas Bruce	Mary "Grandma" Bruce	Nancy Chism	"Rev Dr Mr" Robert E. Jones	Scott Rutledge	Bob & Irene Simington
Kim Sterne	Mary Bruce	Deborah Kaufmann	Ted & Carolyn Kaufmann	Michelle Morrison	Carol Marie Smith
Brendan Terrio	Thomas Buckley and Veronica Shelley	John Joyce	M. Keaney	Eric Gottschalk	Dorothy Smith
Elaine Burkley	James Burkley	Carol Kemp	Alexander Kemp	Edwin Misiph	Sophie, Nathan, Irene, Mel, Rosalie, Sam, Anne, Irving, Pearl, Allen, Jeanne, & Manny
Patricia Brutus	Irene Burnett	Christina Woodford	Ted and Jackie Kennedy	Katherine Spokes	Janet H. Spokes
Alyssa Schatzl	Phyllis Byrnes and Jeanne Crary	Rose Kern	Allan Kern	Linda and Stephen Cappers	Helen Staats
Judith Jacobson	Marty Malster Campbell	Alicia Knoff	Leo Knoff	Ellen Stein	Nathan and Lillian Stein
Susan and George Cohen and Kennedy	Mrs. "Marty" Malster Campbell	Jacqueline Chau	Mrs. Suzanne Kratzer	Alan Swartz	Judi Swartz
Margery Silver	Celia and Bob	Dorothy-Ann Finch	Thecla Kwashi	Amanda Teal	Elena B. Teal
William Chase	Michael Chase	Emily Levin	Ceil Levin	Michael Thomas	Gladys and Joseph Thomas, & Jules and Eleanor Deyden
Dennis Ramsier	Christine Chevoor	Monica Langer	MaryAnne Ludwig	Karen Sauer	Thor
Thomas Louie	Chow Chin	Christina O'Neill	Augustina Lupu	Nina Israel	Those friends lost to COVID 19
Janet Orcutt	George Churchill	Michael Maguire	Maggie Maguire	Linda Holland	Those elders who lost their lives during this pandemic
Ed Churchill	Mary P. Churchill	Juliet Martone	Mildred Martone	Karen Kelly	Marjorie Tierney
Ashika Shah	Ree Clark	Stephen Reinstein	May	Kelly Nee	Anne Tinlin
Leah Giles	Joseph Cohen	Dana Ortegon	Sr. Dana McCambley, SSJ	Glenn Inghram	Elaine Trout, Bently Beagle, & Gracie Beagle, who passed away on January 25, 1991.
John Connelly	John T. Connelly, aka Southie's "Benefit John"	Kimberly McDowell	Barbara McDowell	Christopher Grande	Uncle Ralph
Deborah Harold	John Cunniff	Jovanna Fazzini	Helena Meade	Eileen Myers	Sai Vallabha
		Natalie Metz	Raymond J. Metz Jr.	Lori Tsuruda	PetPal Vesta
				Alana Whelan	Sheila Whelan
				Joyce Graff	June Freed Wilcox
				Susan Wolfson	Arthur Wolfson

Those Who
 ed Our Lives

DONORS



Making an Impact Along the Way *Giving from a Warm Hand*

“*I can see my dollars at work, making a difference in people’s lives.*”



People connect with FriendshipWorks for many reasons. Some make a difference in the life of an elder by referring them to one of our free services; others may be willing to be a friend by volunteering in one of our six programs; many help create new pathways in aging by fostering partnerships and community. For other people, they may make a difference by contributing financially.

In 1995, Dr. Becky Silliman reached out to FriendshipWorks for all of those reasons.

How did you learn about FriendshipWorks?

When I came to work at Boston Medical Center and joined the Geriatrics section, and I became a home care doctor, Match-up Interfaith Volunteers, which later became FriendshipWorks,

was always a part of the fabric. Our home care program has always been about teamwork, interdisciplinary care, and partnerships with those in the community. So whenever anyone knew about FriendshipWorks, it was because it had already been part of our practice.

What about our mission captured your interest?

It started as a professional interest because FriendshipWorks was part of our team, and helping our patients live independently and more productive and happy lives than they would be able to without it. I’ve supported FriendshipWorks for a long time.

When I retired, I thought the horizon was not as far away, so it behooves one to think about their end-of-life plans and financial plans. As I did that, I thought,

I could put everything in trust and wait until the end and let it be distributed however I say. But then there would be no joy or opportunity to see how the contribution was being used. So I thought there was a 3rd way—a middle way.

“I thought, Why don’t I give away modest amounts while I’m alive?” And, I will give those amounts every year to two organizations whose mission I believe in, whose organizations are doing good things and have great leadership. It’s just great fun because I know that it will be used well and it is needed. I know that whether it’s for inner-city kids learning to swim, or teaching people how to grow healthy food, or contributing to elder programs, or healing the environment, I can see my dollars at work, making a difference in people’s lives.

Your interest deepened into a serious financial commitment. Can you share about that and why felt it was so important to contribute?

Every organization that I've contributed to is relatively small. Giving to a larger organization may not make a huge difference, but for smaller organizations, it might. I have chosen missions and organizations that I thought this would be a meaningful contribution to.

In your medical specialty, you were probably acutely aware of the issues surrounding aging and social isolation. How would you characterize the value that FriendshipWorks brings to the elder population?

I can't say it any more eloquently than your volunteers or recipients. Their stories tell it all. I really enjoy getting the newsletters—because I enjoy reading the stories; they are wonderful.

Whether it's getting to a doctor and negotiating that (Medical Escorts); or having young people's lives being transformed by friendship (Friendly Visiting and Friendly Helping) and how they think about themselves, their lives, and older adults ... their stories tell it all.

I fundamentally believe, as an older adult who is retired, that I have the gift of friendship, financial security, and I'm healthy. But I know that keeping oneself active physically, mentally, and socially—all those are incredibly important to successful aging. What FriendshipWorks brings is a lot of help in all of those areas. In my view, what the healthcare world does is important, but it's a fraction compared to everything else. Because if you don't have everything else, a pill is not going to do much. Medical care is important, but having a purpose like meeting or talking with a volunteer is essential. Having a purpose is key. For example, I know that I have to get myself ready because my volunteer is coming over, or is going to call or

Facetime me. I have to get myself organized and ready to go. I have a purpose.

You also play music and know the benefits of that for health (brain, visceral connection). Can you talk a little bit about that?

I've been a flute player since I was 10 years old. When I was 44 years old, I decided I wanted to play the organ, not realizing how incredibly challenging that was! You have to move your arms and legs independently and read three staves of music. Needless to say, it's taken a lot of time to learn to play modest pieces. When I turned 50, I bought a home practice organ (104 pipes and stands 8 feet tall). I play with other medical professionals and sharing that music provides cognitive, physical, and emotional connections. Music can be calming, joyful, and provide a connection to memories.

One of the nice things about music is that it can be lifelong and in so many different ways provides joy to myself and others. One of the things I've been doing in my retirement years is advocating for arts education in public schools in Providence, Rhode Island. Music and the visual arts have been around since the beginning of time. Connection to the arts is part of our way of thinking and part of who we are in so many ways. The arts are so fundamental to life.

As a former medical practitioner, how do you view the MusicWorks program for older adults and the part that plays for their health?

Music is deeply in all of us. Whether it's the memories, comfort, a window to God, or the social or physical aspects of it, music has the power to evoke a variety of feelings. It's a fabulous way to connect people by getting into their souls and emotional beings, giving them some opportunities to be physically active. Music can provide context for younger folks to understand

the times of a different era of the older adults with whom they are matched.

Can you talk about how FriendshipWorks enhances or intersects with others in the field of social isolation and Geriatrics?

So many of the service organizations (Visiting Nurses Association or Senior Centers or medical) are service organizations and are institutionalized. They have particular jobs that they have to do and fill an important role. However, there is a big difference between a paid provider and a volunteer who wants to spend time with you.

It seems to me that what FriendshipWorks does is so personal and fundamental. It's about connecting people. It's not following regulations and billable hours, etc. It's meeting needs that are human and personal. There are a lot of cracks that need to be filled. And FriendshipWorks fills in a lot of those holes that are essential to people's joy, happiness, and fulfillment. A friend does a lot to complement what more formal services do.

What would you say to anyone considering a financial contribution to FriendshipWorks?

I would say do it! I would say that it's incredibly cost-effective—it's a solid investment. You can wait, but if you have the wherewithal now, do it. You never know what tomorrow will bring.

DONORS

It's Never Too Late to Consider a Legacy Gift!

Have you thought about including FriendshipWorks in your estate plans? If not, it's never too late to consider a legacy gift to perpetuate your generosity, and to ensure that thousands of elders benefit from the organization's many programs for decades to come. Legacy gifts help to ensure FriendshipWorks' future.

Too often, planned giving is thought to be too complex and too hard to understand. There are many easy giving options—ranging from naming our organization as a beneficiary in your will to more complex trust arrangements. Please consult with your estate planning attorney to determine the right plan to achieve your goals.

Here are some simple approaches to consider:

Gifts by Will or Living Trust

Leave a bequest to FriendshipWorks of a set amount or as a percentage of your estate. You can also gift from the balance or residue of your estate, or make a beneficiary designation of certain assets. Benefits of leaving a bequest include (1) leaving a lasting legacy to be remembered, (2) lessening the burden of taxes on your family, and (3) possibly receiving estate tax savings.

Gifts of Retirement Plans

Consider naming FriendshipWorks as a beneficiary of your retirement plans. Your retirement plan may be worth more when donated to FriendshipWorks than to your heirs.

IRA Distributions

If you or a family member are 70 ½ or older with an individual retirement account (IRA), you can make a tax-free gift to FriendshipWorks directly from your IRA, reducing your taxable income. This is called a qualified charitable distribution.

Gifts of Life Insurance

Name FriendshipWorks as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy; this is a wonderful way to make a special gift to FriendshipWorks without dipping into your capital assets.

Life Income Gifts

Earn income for yourself or beneficiaries when you create a Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA) or Charitable Remainder Trust (CRT) to benefit FriendshipWorks.

For more information or to discuss these gift opportunities in greater detail, please contact Executive Director Janet Seckel-Cerrotti at jseckel-cerrotti@fw4elders.org or 617-482-1510 x127.



Recurring Monthly Giving Program

Join FriendshipWorks' effort to end elder isolation and create community connections by supporting the programs and initiatives focused on friendship and assistance for older adults – now more critical than ever!

Best Funding Friend (BFF) combines the ease of donating (monthly or quarterly) with the satisfaction of making a meaningful impact in our service to elders!

How it's easy! You decide on a recurring monthly gift amount, which is automatically charged to your credit or debit card — and you don't have to think about it again and you can discontinue at any time.

For example: You become a loyal \$120 annual donor, your monthly donation of \$10 will be deducted over the next 12 months, which helps sustain funding for essential programs and initiatives such as Medical Escorts, Friendly Visiting, Friendly Helping, PetPals, Relaxing Through the Arts, and our Elder Low Vision and LGBT Elder initiatives.

How it's impactful: Your increased support provides additional resources for our programs, allowing us to help more older adults each year and to bring us one step closer to our shared dream of ending elder isolation in Greater Boston. And, it further allows FriendshipWorks to create meaningful matches with volunteers who often report that their own benefits are as great as those of their match!

Our fiscal year begins on July 1, so it's the perfect time to start your monthly deduction! Visit our website today to sign up and become a FriendshipWorks BFF! You can start as a monthly BFF, or use the option to make your donation quarterly.

Please visit us at: <https://www.fw4elders.org/best-funding-friend-bff/>

Please contact Cara Stuka at 617-482-1510 x147 with questions or for more information about making a recurring gift from your checking account or through payroll deduction.

In Their Own Words

The best way to show what a gift to FriendshipWorks means is to share the words we often hear from those who interact with FriendshipWorks.

Through FriendshipWorks, I've gained a friend. And I've gained a community of people who care.
— *Maggie, Friendly Caller Volunteer*

Without this program, far too many seniors would not get the care they need. — *Russ, Medical Escort Volunteer*

We can't do what we need to without a service like FriendshipWorks Medical Escorts. Thank you! — *Martha, MGH healthcare worker, referral*

My friendly visitors really brighten my day. They have really helped me tremendously.
— *Elaine, Friendly Visitor recipient*

I always know I can count on FriendshipWorks volunteers to give me a hand. And I've had nothing but good experiences with all of them. — *Sheldon, Medical Escort and Friendly Visitor recipient*

FriendshipWorks has been an unbelievably invaluable resource to my family. Every volunteer we've had over the years has been wonderful. — *Robin, family member of Sheldon, recipient*

I'm 93 years old, so I found out just how important friendships are. — *David, Friendly Caller Volunteer and recipient*



I have a mutt, Daisy, who is a sweet dog and always very gentle. She loves older people. My grandmother was in rehabilitation facility and I went to visit her and brought Daisy. My grandmother loved having her there and she responded so well. So when my Grandmother passed away, I thought, I could

carry on in her memory. I signed up with PetPals, and visited elder residences until the pandemic hit. One gentleman, Joe was 102 years old and he was very quiet. But when he met Daisy, he would pet her and tell me about going to the beach in Quincy and share memories. — *Darcy, PetPals volunteer*

My match has made me feel more connected to the community and led to a genuine friendship. It has been a wonderful experience from which we both benefit. I feel like I am able to make a difference in a match's life, and I have likewise gained a true friend who teaches me more about the area and her own life experience. — *Friendly Visitor volunteer*

Being matched with an elder I was able to communicate and learn from their stories. I was able to learn about their passion and their struggles through life and that has definitely helped me become a more compassionate and patient person. — *Friendly Visitor volunteer*



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Email: friend@fw4elders.org
Website: www.fw4elders.org

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Permit #59690

Formerly Match-Up Interfaith Volunteers



SAVE THE DATE!

Friendship Walks, Friendship Talks, That's Why *FriendshipWorks*

The 6th annual **Walk to End Elder Isolation: A Virtual Gathering** takes place on **Sunday, May 16 at 10am**. Join us for music, special presentations, contests, and a message from the United Kingdom's Minister of Loneliness!

Please join us for a morning of inspiration, excitement, before taking a safely distanced walk.



Sign-up at www.fw4elders.org/walk

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